

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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February 2014

Community Development Newsletter

Coordinating entrepreneurship strategies across your community and region



Dear Friends,

Supporting entrepreneurs is an important component of community development, and in this newsletter, we are pleased to highlight much of this work happening around the commonwealth.

Communities and regions are supporting new businesses by layering resources and mapping local assets. They are tapping a variety of grant programs and technical resources from DHCD

and other state partners. Their efforts are strategic and ongoing, and they are creating systems that attract, support and retain businesses.

Inside this issue, find tips from Southwest Virginia on engaging supporters and dedicated collaborators. Read about innovative strategies tailored to individual communities. See how local resources are aligned toward shared visions. There are good things happening in entrepreneurship throughout Virginia, so check out the articles for ideas and inspiration.

Please join us in asking these key questions in your community, and let us know how we can help.

- What goal is your community and region working toward?
- What do you want it to be in five years? Ten years?
- What role do the current businesses play in reaching that vision?
- What viable new businesses could play a part?
- How can you support them as a region or community?

You have potential business owners in the wings right now, readying to invest, and they might just do so with the encouragement and support of a strategic community behind them

All the best in 2014.

Sincerely,

Lisa Ci, Citkinson

Deputy Director

Community Development Division







First, the Plan

BUILD A REGIONAL PLAN FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In 2013, several regions developed or furthered collaborative entrepreneurship plans. The scale, across multiple counties, allows local governments and community partners to tap resources in a consistent and coordinated way, aligning them with specific economic restructuring and marketing strategies.

The idea is that entrepreneurship development underpinned by regional and local strategies is more likely to result in a strong community ecosystem of support and patronage.

Leading the way for much of the commonwealth, Southwest Virginia, under the facilitation and guidance of the Office of Economic Development at UVa-Wise, released the Blueprint for Entrepreneurial Growth and Economic Prosperity in Southwest Virginia. Supported by the Virginia Coalfield Coalition and the University of Virginia, the project was coordinated within the Appalachian Prosperity Project, a cross-sector collaborative bringing together partners around goals in education, health and entrepreneurship.

While the Blueprint engaged the entrepreneurial development community across a 19-county region, the initial implementation efforts, guided by the mySWVAopportunity Steering Committee, piloted the first recommended strategies in a seven-county region.

"At this scale, we can set goals and track our progress toward them," said steering committee member Shannon Blevins,

director of economic development at UVa-Wise. "That means counting new businesses and jobs, but also tracking the potential entrepreneurs in our pipeline. We think that, collectively, we can do a better job of coordinating support and resources."

"This plan is a living document," said steering committee member Deborah Wagner, director of community economic development at People Incorporated Financial Services. "We're starting to check items off and move on to the next. We are adding more that we want to do. And, we credit the structure of the plan as propelling us forward together." She continued, "We keep shaping it as we go. You cannot get bogged down by the plan. It is a tool for action."

More information on the plan, including links to the plan and current strategies, is available online at www.approject.org. For resources on entrepreneurship in the region, visit www.mySWVAopportunity.org. Read about the Lessons Learned from the planning process in the sidebar by Shannon Blevins in this newsletter.

Through Virginia's participation in the national Stronger Economies Together (SET) program, two regions worked with a host of agency collaborators, including DHCD, to develop regional plans for economic strength. Both the Northern Neck and Virginia's Growth Alliance in Southern Virginia created regional entrepreneurship development strategies as part of their plans. The SET program was spearheaded by Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and funded by USDA Rural Development.

Lessons Learned: Follow these 10 tips for a successful regional process



By Shannon Blevins, Director of Economic Development, UVa-Wise

Creating the Blueprint for Entrepreneurial **Growth and Economic** Prosperity in Southwest *Virginia* was a

collaborative effort that helped our region model a collective process that we are now building on to implement the plan. We captured a few lessons learned along the journey because we are growing through the process as we advance the regional strategy. Help us learn. If you have collaboration techniques and best practices that are working in your region to bring everyone together around common goals, let us know by contacting me or Regional Entrepreneurship Coordinator Brandi Hall at sblevins@uvawise.edu or bhall@uvawise.edu.

1. Enlist champions

Our initial invitation to participants in the process was in the form of a signed letter from two well-respected regional leaders: Senator William C. Wampler Jr. and Dr. David Prior, the late Chancellor of UVa-Wise. From the start, it was clear that this was a meaningful effort expected to deliver results.

2. Establish the group

This is very important at the beginning. No one owns a collaborative effort, or rather, everyone owns it. So when a process first kicks off, take the time to step back to establish the group, the process it will use and where it will lead. Once the process is underway, continuously ask participants to identify people who are missing from the discussion.

During the 2012-13 winter and spring, both regions took on a facilitated process and developed their plans, and both are currently rallying resources for further investment in entrepreneurship development according to their plans.

The Northern Neck aligned the regional process with the update of their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) led by the Northern Neck Chesapeake Bay Region Partnership. Incorporating the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland, the full Northern Neck SET plan is available at www.nnpdc.org.

As a next step, the region, through the Northern Neck Planning District Commission, applied for and has been awarded a Building Collaborative Communities (BCC) grant to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem, a network of programs and services that will support entrepreneurial and small business development.

Virginia's Growth Alliance (VGA) rolled out their SET plan at a gathering on Dec. 5 in South Hill. The six-county, one-city economic development collaborative is working on the implementation of a unified portal for the region that gathers all of the entrepreneurship resources into one online place.

"We are working to grow our regional identity," said Executive Director Jeff Reed. "It is an identity that we want associated with business start-ups, with business development, with investment and with success."

The portal is the continuation of efforts toward the vision of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that will cultivate, support and expand business development. Steps

toward this vision are set forth in the full VGA SET plan, which is available at www.vagrowth.com. For more information about entrepreneurship resources in the area, contact Cassandra Smith at cassandra@vagrowth.com or (434) 917-2327.

Regional entrepreneurship plans are emerging across other regions as well. Under a current Building Collaborative Communities grant, the West Piedmont Region, spanning Henry, Pittsylvania and Patrick counties and the cities of Danville and Martinsville is convening stakeholders and partners in the development of a comprehensive regional entrepreneurship plan. Economic development partners in the footprint of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission region are preparing to apply elements of the



My Southwest Virginia Opportunity plan across their six-county, two-city region in conjunction with Appalachian Spring, the outdoor recreation-based community development strategy coordinated through the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, and building upon the successful Marion Pop-Up strategy.

If you would like to have a conversation about how your community or region might better align resources for entrepreneurs, contact Louellen Brumgard at (804)-371-7069 or Louellen.Brumgard@dhcd.virginia.gov.

Lessons Learned: Follow these 10 tips for a successful regional process

3. Invite a facilitator from outside of the region

At the beginning, an outside facilitator helps everyone participate and keeps ownership of the initiative in the hands of the full group. Our full budget included this cost, along with the costs for meeting space, food and refreshments. Consideration should also be given to meeting technology and staff time for follow-up.

4. Go wide

We form regions in many different ways—around jurisdictional borders, shared goals, geographical barriers and functions. Function ultimately drives scale, but err first on the side of inclusivity so that the maximum level of resources can be brought into the plan.

5. Scale back when needed

While we started out very broad, engaging the full 19-county region of Southwest Virginia, we got terrific input from across the area, but when we got down to creating strategies, sub-regional differences and networks were clearly identified. While our published plan pulled together strategies that were provided by and applicable across the whole region, we found that our implementation efforts had to be scaled to a pilot seven-county area for manageability. Now, as energy builds in the other parts of the region, we have our collaborative gears greased and state and regional partners ready to assist. We have a starting point.

6. Creatively engage key stakeholder groups

Consider specific strategies to engage the private sector, emerging entrepreneurs, young professionals and youth. Focus groups, one-on-one interviews and some key questions prepared for "on-the-fly," chance encounters may be the best ways to engage those who often do not have time to participate in the meeting-heavy processes that often shape these efforts. The input and engagement of key stakeholders and informants is the important piece, not how the group gets it.

7. Always continue adding new partners into the mix

Just because a group is not part of the first meeting does not mean that they cannot help shape and implement a regional plan. We found that, as inclusive as we tried to be up front, we are still adding partners into the effort. All it has required is a one-on-one conversation to bring them up to speed and an active way to fold them into the process. We recommend partnering them with a long-term participant on a small project, allowing the new participant



Lessons Learned: Follow these 10 tips for a successful regional process

to quickly add value while recognizing the existing work of the group. Some might say that involving too many people proves cumbersome. That may be the case at first, but in the end we believe it will be critical to the success of the effort. Collaboration is not always easy, but in the long run, it is worth it.

8. Communicate and honor contributions to build trust Each partner brings unique investments, experience, ideas and contributions to both the planning and implementation phases. The plan is the tool that helps pull all of these together toward better outcomes. Leaving something off of the plan or ignoring the existing work of any of the partners will make the plan less effective and can damage the trust among partners that is key to the success of the effort.

9. Track progress

Initially, we used a status sheet as we went along so that the group could see progress toward our goal. Also, as pieces of the plan were developed, we sent them out to the full group so that those who had not been able to come to meetings could stay abreast of it and contribute.

10. Designate a convening point

In Southwest Virginia, we rallied resources from Virginia Tourism Corporation, UVa-Wise and DHCD to hire a staff person on a part-time basis to shepherd the effort and the region's many participants in it. The staff person has helped keep us focused and fosters the communication needed to keep us all on the same page. Even with that convening point early on, we underestimated just how often the group needs to meet physically to keep on track.

Not Just Anytown, USA SHARING YOUR UNIQUE ECONOMIC VISION THROUGH A TAILORED BUSINESS INCENTIVE PACKAGE

In community development planning efforts, the question has been raised, "Isn't economic restructuring just a highfalutin way to say business development?" Well, we think the answer is no. Business development implies improving the strength of individual businesses. Economic restructuring focuses on the system in place and on creating a shared vision for the future.

Each community has a reason for its existence, often around an industry or a complementary suite of industries particular to the assets of that place. The seafood industry underpinned communities of the Chesapeake Bay. Access to water and power along rivers such as the Dan, James and New prompted the development of mill towns. And of course, camps like Dante and towns such as St. Paul thrived on the coal-rich mountains of the southwest reaches of the state. But, in an ever-shifting global economic landscape, any single-source footing is far from sure.

Strengthening the footing of local economies means asking some key questions:

- Why is the town here today?
- How is the community affected by regional, state, national and global trends?
- How does the community contribute to these trends?
- What will be its purpose in another 20 years?

By understanding the current trajectory of a community, stakeholders, residents and leaders can begin to establish a preferred path for the future. The resulting economic vision, no matter what it's based upon, requires local businesses. It only makes sense that a community's business incentive package accurately reflects the vision, and that it incentivizes the kinds of business needed to make the desired future a reality.

If you listen to Staunton leaders tell the story of their current success, they will take you back decades. A vision built on capitalizing on historic architecture, local colleges and cultural assets like the American Shakespeare Center have had great success, and the vision has grown and expanded upon itself. Newer incentives, including those of their Enterprise Zone, favor the local and the downtown and use current successes including



tourism, the Stonewall Jackson Hotel and strong local businesses to foster new. complementary businesses. Toward this end, the Staunton Creative **Community Fund** offers tailored assistance, loan packages and creative community-building efforts targeted at

farm-to-table, retail and arts-related businesses.

In nearby Waynesboro, a downtown revitalization process has helped to align resources in positioning the community's South River, which once attracted a DuPont manufacturing plant and other large factories, to lure fly fisherman and outdoor tourists to the scenic valley town. Speaking to a crowd gathered at the Southwest Virginia Creative Economy Conference, Katie McElroy, the city's tourism director, presented a new incentive strategy tied directly to that strategic vision that the community will use to incentivize very specific types of businesses in three specifically outlined areas of town.

"We have different development goals for different parts of our community. So, it makes sense that we would have differently targeted incentives, thresholds and success measures."

Katie McElroy, City of Waynesboro Tourism Director

For more information about the Tourism Development Zones approved by Waynesboro City Council in late November, read the article in the News Virginian or download the ordinance.



As part of My Southwest Virginia Opportunity's Entrepreneur Challenge, three communities have been working with a team of steering committee members to tailor their own incentive packages: Haysi, St. Paul and Big Stone Gap. Each community that volunteered had previously developed a community vision through DHCD's Community Development Block Grant Planning Grant process. All three have visions tied to the cultural heritage and outdoor recreation strategies through which Southwest Virginia is strengthening its creative economy.

Steps used in the process:

- Establish a community vision, supported by a broad cross section of stakeholders, including town council.
- As part of an economic restructuring strategy, identify what specific businesses and services are needed to make that economic vision a reality.
- Assess the barriers that could be preventing potential and emerging businesses from opening or incentives that might help existing businesses expand their offerings. This means talking to business owners and potential entrepreneurs.
- Structure a dream list of incentives to make investment more attractive to the potential or existing business owner.
- Explore the unique aspects of your community that create a supportive environment for your businesses, resources that can be tapped to market businesses and ways that the community of businesses can work stronger together.
- 6. Assess and identify the appropriate tools from those available.
- 7. Work with the council to pass needed tools.
- 8. Market the package; market your vision and market your community of opportunity to residents and potential business investors.

Three communities have begun developing

their packages, and more work will be done in the spring. They practiced communicating their vision to a group of more than 90 gathered to celebrate the culmination of the Entrepreneur Challenge on Dec. 3, and they are developing support ecosystems from that group. See the summary below for how the community visions and are starting to line up.

As a gateway to the Breaks Interstate Park, **Haysi** is where "your break begins." The mountain community can be a destination for complementary experiences for visitors to the park and others wanting dining options and the experience of Southwest Virginia culture. Business opportunities include restaurant, community-identity



oriented retail, outfitters and other businesses building on the outdoor opportunities. Convenience business that serve both residents and visitors, providing access to fresh foods and services currently not available in the community are another opportunity. Contact Mayor Larry Yates and Haysi Partners President Matthew Owens for more information.

Big Stone Gap is "a little town with a big story." The filming of Adriana Trigiani's Big Stone Gap in the fall of 2013 is helping to propel the community toward their vision of a healthy, walkable town connected with greenway trails and dotted with museums and literary culture. Specific businesses that can contribute to a community that tells a spirited story of a region and a people include restaurants, communityidentity oriented retail, artisan craft and books and businesses that build upon and contribute to the active lifestyle of the region. Specific incentives include a Technology Zone which allows business license reductions, tax exemptions and savings based on job creation and real property investment. More incentives are under development. For more information, contact Town Manager Pat Murphy.

St. Paul provides "a moving river



experience," and recent investments are creating an active walkable community surrounding Market Square. Positioned on the Clinch River and at the first trailhead of the Spearhead Trails system, St. Paul is an ideal location for a small hotel or other lodging, quality restaurants, locally-made value-added agricultural products and outdoor-related businesses and traveler services. Incentives include those in a newly developed Toursim Zone and a dedicated marketing fund. As a Main Street



community, businesses in the downtown district also benefit from a coordinated promotional, design and economic restructuring strategy. Contact Mayor Kyle Fletcher or Industrial Development Authority Chair Bob Harrison for more information.

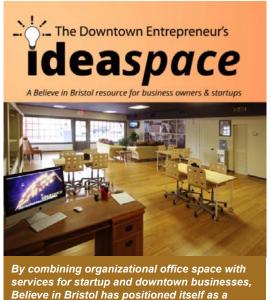
We will continue to add examples and models to the community incentive toolkit. Use it to start the conversation in your community. For the complete set of resources, visit the training archives of the Building Entrepreneurial Economies (BEE) Program.

Does your community have a unique incentive for business driven by your strategic vision? We are looking for examples as we build a toolkit for other community efforts. To have yours included, or to get assistance in developing incentives in your community, contact Louellen Brumguard at (804) 371-7069 or Louellen.Brumgard@dhcd.virginia.gov.

The Business of Community

DHCD GRANTEES BUILD SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS,
BUSINESSES, AND CREATIVE, COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Support for entrepreneurs requires entrepreneurial approaches, and in the past year, we have seen many communities in the commonwealth stepping out to try new strategies. At the heart of these is a partnership approach that connects local governments, nonprofit service providers, potential and current business owners and supportive community members. It is that connection point from which a sense of community and a sense of ownership can grow.



Bristol Builds a Collaboration Space

Coworking strategies are afoot throughout the commonwealth. Bristol Virginia's effort was funded through an Innovation Grant of the Building Entrepreneurial Economies (BEE) program. Believe in Bristol wanted to highlight opportunities for entrepreneurs in their community with central and visible shared space for innovative connectedness. The result is ideaspace, a storefront solution to provide downtown entrepreneurs access to technology, meeting space and training to help them establish and grow new businesses downtown.

Watch a <u>video interview here</u> about the specific project. Or for

a primer on the potential of coworking, check out this <u>quick video by Turnstone</u> <u>Furniture</u>. While Bristol's public-private partnership model brings training and technical assistance into the space, other coworking spaces in the commonwealth have been privately funded. In any case, the efforts create synergetic spaces in which entrepreneurs feed off of each other's energy and ideas. Supported by collaborative relationships and greater business-to-to-business opportunity, the businesses may grow stronger and more quickly than they could alone. A supply of good coffee appears to be key to them all.

Some other shared space solutions to check out:

OpenSpace, Charlottesville
Business Playce, Fredricksburg
Momentum Coworking, Lynchburg
804RVA, Richmond
16 West, Staunton
Bright Cowork, Winchester

center for entrepreneurial energy.

The Shenandoah Valley knits a local economy

The hOUR Economy is an emerging strategy to build and network one of a community's greatest resources: social capital. The foundation of the effort is the belief that each individual has valuable contributions they can make in the community. Those services are marketable, but at the scale they are provided, they may not be a viable full-time business. However, if there were an easy system of exchange, then a friendly cooperative marketplace could emerge.

That's where hOUR Economy comes in. If you earn an hour walking someone's dog, then you can spend the hour you earned doing it by giving it to someone who gives



Establishing a Successful Loan Fund

Providing access to capital is an important role the community can play in supporting start-ups and expanding businesses. DHCD has several resources for local loan funds.

- 1. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Innovation Grants can support a local loan fund and delivery of needed technical assistance to foster business development as aligned with CDBG goals. The key here is job creation. Once the initial loans are made, the program income, in the form of loan repayments, can typically be retained in the community to fund other entrepreneurs.
- 2. Building Entrepreneurial Economies (BEE) grantees include Virginia's microenterprise development organizations (MDOs). These organizations provide access to capital for businesses with five or fewer employees and capital needs (loans) of under \$50,000. Many BEE grantees manage local loan funds, operating at a regional scale to reduce the administration costs for local governments and increasing the fund effectiveness. With dedicated staff and collaborative marketing and promotion, the money is more likely to get in the hands of businesses. Check out a list of Virginia's MDOs at www.dhcd.virginia. gov/bee.
- 3. BEE Innovation and Planning Grants can provide both small pools of funds and the technical support of staff members to help tailor a unique strategy, aligned with your community vision, to help get micro-enterprise loans in the hands of growing businesses or individuals interested in starting a business. These can be generally be recieved by either a community or regional entity or an MDO managing the loan fund.

you a foot massage (your feet are tired after all). Or, you may earn an hour for your services in graphic design and use it to pay for an accountant to review your business books. Hours are treated equally and like currency.

"You will not be able to live your whole life on the hOUR economy," said Staunton Creative Community Fund Executive Director Christina Cain. "But it builds trust among neighbors, and it paves the way for greater support for local businesses. We think it is also going to spark some new businesses."

Hear Cain talk about the hOUR Economy, an initiative developed with a BEE Innovation Grant, in this short video. Watch an online tutorial, read frequently asked questions, and join the timebank at houreconomy.org.

Collaborative approach brings together downtown, micro-enterprise and incubation networks

A BEE Innovation grant helped to lay the foundation for the Virginia Community Economic Network (VCEN), an emerging collaborative connecting entrepreneurs to local resources and potentially advocating for place-based, small-business-friendly strategies and policies. The first combined conference will be June 2-4 in Roanoke. Watch this short video to hear Meghan Williamson, a strategic consultant who led the planning effort for Virginia Community Capital, talk about the possibility of this group. Follow progress of the network on Facebook.

Local entrepreneurs use technology to tap local and not-so-local capital

A BEE Innovation Grant helped to build a partnership with Kiva Zip to connect Southern Virginia entrepreneurs to a unique loan opportunity.

In 2013, Capital One helped roll out Kiva Zip in Virginia by offering limited matching of loans attracted through the online crowdfunding system.

<u>Kiva Zip</u> allows for person-to-person lending. You can, as an individual, go online and provide capital to entrepreneurs who you think are playing an important role in a community. To be eligible to have their business and capital needs advertised, entrepreneurs must be sponsored by a trustee organization.

The BEE Innovation Grant helped one of Virginia's trustees work in the Virginia's Growth Alliance (VGA) region to train entrepreneurs and help them access the system. Bruce, a graduate of the VGA entrepreneurial training classes and a mortgage broker in South Hill, used a Kiva Zip loan to grow his business. The micro-enterprise development organization endorsed his loan application for investment in Southside Mortgage Corporation. In addition to the partnership through a trustee organization, another important element of Kiva Zip is the entrepreneur's story. This is what connects people to the aspirations of the business owner and the community benefits of the business. Here is an excerpt of Bruce's story.

Bruce received loan funding from 168 lenders from literally around the world (Mark in Australia, Szucheng in Taiwan, Merlyn in Norway), as well as right in his own back yard. He has already begun repayment and will continue with 104 weekly payments on the \$5,000 loan.

Visit <u>www.kivazip.org</u> to sign up to lend, learn more about the opportunities or learn more about Bruce. In Virginia, Kiva Zip trustees include BEE grantee Community Investment Forum (CIC). Watch a short interview with <u>Community Investment Collaborative here</u>.

The Gateway Center for Enterprise office inspires and cultivates entrepreneurs

In partnership with The Center for Women's Enterprise at REDC Community Capital Group and the Crater Small Business Development Center of Longwood University, Virginia's Gateway Region (VGR) launched the Gateway Center for Enterprise in July 2013.

The Gateway Center is focused on cultivating entrepreneurship-based job creation along with new and existing business growth in Virginia's Gateway Region (VGR) through programs, trainings, one-on-one assistance, resource library, mentors, conferences and partnerships.

Virginia's Gateway Region is a nonprofit economic development organization existing to enhance the economic development opportunities for the cities of Colonial Heights, Hopewell and Petersburg and the counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Prince George, Surry and Sussex.

For the complete list of programs and services offered at the VGR visit www.gatewayregion.com/events/. This center is supported by a Building Collaborative Communities (BCC) grant.



Joseph Dunovant and Danielle Florio, owners of Votava receive business counseling at The Gateway Center for Enterprise.





An example of my desire to help customers meet their dream of home ownership is exemplified by a former customer who had rented for several years with little credit and having worked for the town for several years as a garbage collector. He so wanted to purchase a home for he and his family. He was unable to secure home financing from the local banks, but I researched the fact that he had a good rental history and had paid his bills as agreed. On good faith, I decided to approve him for a home loan. He never forgot the fact that I was willing to take a chance in lending to him when others would not and made it a point to pay his payment on time for the term of the loan and shared this experience with others he came in touch with.

Pitches, Plans and Promotions

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Getting community attention on new businesses, innovative ideas and emerging entrepreneurs can help a community align formal and informal resources toward its goals. There are several models for hosting informal conversations

Ignite® ("enlighten us but make it quick") and Pecha Kucha™ nights are casual evening gatherings that include business and community idea presentations in a strict format of 20 slides that advance every 15 or 20 seconds for a five minute total. These have been used in communities around Virginia, including Williamsburg and Christiansburg, with Staunton Creative Community Fund attaching prize money to top presentations in Ignite® programs

Pop Up Marion Outcomes to Date	
Rounds of eight-week business training classes	4
Participants	103
Graduates	31
Buildings Sold	4
Storefronts filled	8
New businesses	13
New jobs	62
Indirect new businesses	6
Indirect new jobs	14

run in the communities of Staunton and Waynesboro. For more information, visit_www.igniteshow.com or www.pechakucha.org.

The Marion Ewing Kauffman Foundation's **1 Million Cups (1MC)** program provides another community building model. Each week, each 1MC program offers two local entrepreneurs an opportunity to present their startups to a diverse audience of mentors, advisors and entrepreneurs. Presenters prepare a six-minute educational presentation and engage in 20 minutes of feedback and questioning after they present. There are currently fewer than 20 sites in locations all around the country in the growing program. Events



are held every Wednesday morning from 9-10 a.m. Watch videos and learn about entrepreneurial communities across the country at www.1millioncups.com.

As part of Charlottesville's annual Tom Tom Festival, the **Community Investment Collaborative** hosts a pitch night in which the participants in the organization's networking-based approach to training, financing and mentoring presented their business plans for a chance for the crowd to choose the winner of \$1,000. www.cicville.org.

Funded by the Virginia Main Street program and Wells Fargo, Marion's Popup strategy engaged the community in several ways. First, the Marion Downtown Development Association (MDDA) surveyed the community to identify what kinds of businesses they would support. By connecting business training, prize money, advertising time and available space in a package of comprehensive support, the community coordinated its resources in an innovative approach to supporting entrepreneurs who answered the call.

The community has run Pop Up Marion three times since May 2012. To date, the strategy has resulted in 13 new businesses downtown, employing 62 people. Town of Marion Director of Community and Economic Development Ken Heath credits community support as the reason for the program's success.

"This is a way of encouraging the local economy," said Heath. "If residents feel a part of the business up front, they are more likely to support that business on a weekly or daily basis. Tied to our 'Join the Revolution' shop local campaign, we have been very active with a specific message, and it is being heard."

"The real difference in the community that I see is the growing sense of possibility," said Wells Fargo Community Relations Officer Tommye Arnold. "It is exciting to be a part of the entrepreneurs' successes. We're helping to build local wealth, and those dollars are more likely to stay here in the region."

Taking the work of Pop-up Marion to a regional scale, the Entrepreneur Challenge in far Southwest Virginia tied the business competition to established regional strategies such as The Crooked Road, the Artisan Trails of Southwest Virginia and Appalachian Spring and included a supportive, yet competitive approach to pitching business ideas. The process for participants included both judged pitch nights and less formal pitch practice nights in which the participants provided each other feedback and encouragement. Watch videos of the individual pitches here, or watch a video below describing the entire process.





Get Started!

Here are some more resources from state and national partners for communities building their entrepreneurial spirit.

Keys to Economic Success: Growing Entrepreneurial Communities is a 10-part monthly newsletter series released in 2013 by the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. Download all ten keys in the newsletter archive under Entrepreneurial Communities Updates.

Virginia Cooperative Extension worked with a team of business development



resource providers to develop a Q & A Guide for Growing and Starting your Business as a resource for the Entrepreneur Express Workshops. It has been updated for 2013 and is a good summary of

resources to build into your local support package.

Artisan businesses can tap a wealth of support through the <u>Artisans Center of Virginia</u>, which coaches community teams on strengthening the system of artisan and agri-artisan businesses through their Artisan Trail Program. In Southwest Virginia, <u>'Round the Mountain</u> provides specific marketing, technical assistance,



WE HOPE YOU PLAN TO JOIN US!

Invoking the Power of Your Trail: Leveraging your artisan trail to maximize your business.

Join us as we wine, dine and explor how to make the most of your experience as an <u>O Shenandoah</u> County Artisan Trall site!



Wednesday, February 19 at the Edinburg Mill (214 South Main Street, Edinburg, VA 22824) Snowdate Feb. 26

and educational resources for artisans of the 19-county region.

Local farmers markets are a great place to foster new businesses and encourage and support the growth of new entrepreneurs. If you are working with developing foodbased businesses, check out these fact sheets from Virginia Cooperative Extension:

- Before You Get Started as a Food Entrepreneur
- <u>Insurance Coverage for Food</u> Entrepreneurs
- Marketing Considerations for Small Food Processors
- Preparing a Food Processing Business
 Plan
- Registering and Licensing Your Food Business

Virginia's state agencies and their departments understand the importance of coordinating support for entrepreneurship and emerging businesses in your region. The Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), the Department of Business Assistance (DBA), Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and universities and community colleges are just a few of the partners who are ready to work with your region. Any one of them is a fine place to start

building your team.